

Marshal

The Eloquence of a Distinctive Talent



Sans titre, 24 x 30 in

If contemporary creativity benefits from extensive archives compiling centuries of widely diverse artistic proposals, it also inherits the challenge of reinventing déjà vu. The bar is raised even higher by the multiplied avenues of artworks dissemination. How to express himself differently, in a way that has never been done before, has been Joe Marshal Foster's motivation from the outset. Without ever negating the past, his approach consists in absorbing parts of the culture that shapes a person's way of life while striving to find unexplored avenues that correlate his profoundly personal vision of the world. In his opinion, an artist's work will stand out only if he adopts a pictorial language that reveals his uniqueness and authenticity. "Art has existed for such a long time, it is the cultures revolving around it that change. Since everything has already been done, an artist must find a way to express what's already known with surprising originality." To honour his grandfather, an exceptional man in his eyes from whom he draws his middle name, he chooses Marshal as his signature.

Having grown up in the small town of Perth, Ontario, where art is quite distant from the mostly agricultural interests of the region's inhabitants, young Marshall nevertheless prefers drawing to any other pastime. Since the wooden pencils his father uses for his work as a logger are laying all over the house, those are what he uses as he draws assiduously, an activity that soon transforms into a true passion. In a fortunate turn of events, renowned painter Douglas Manning, a London Central School of Art graduate, takes him under his wing to pass on his knowledge and overtime becomes an important figure in his life. After a period of rigorous training that mainly focussed on detail, Kavin Chan, a graduate of the largest art school in China, imparts more theoretical notions concerning the various historical artistic movements in painting, thus widening his horizon in terms of style variations. This second mentor's influence contributes to his loosening his gesture and his mode of expression. Further along, after having held several jobs, Joe Foster injures his back and realizes that his only remaining means of earning a living is through painting. This ordeal is thus a blessing in disguise as it leads him to wholly focus on his art, on a path that one could say had been paved by destiny. Today, he essentially uses wide commercial type brushes as well as painting knives to scrape, scratch or mark the surface. "I own a quantity of high-end brushes of all sizes, but I by far prefer those found in hardware stores, where I enjoy loitering as they are full of objects I find inspiring. I've also rediscovered my childhood's wax-based crayons, which react softly to the rather aggressive pressure I apply without losing any of the subtleties of the various shades of grey." Allusive



Sans titre, 24 x 30 in

silhouettes of bison, deer or other mammals, are thusly depicted in a rough and spare but rather complex environment.

Constantly searching the Internet to further his knowledge, rock and cave art paintings one day capture his attention. He notices with amazement that the motifs are not formed by the sum of juxtaposed lines but rather are traced with one sole continuous line following a predetermined spatial arrangement. Fascinated with the ancients' thoughtful approach, he develops a keen interest towards primitive realism, an ideal theme that is perfectly suited to his desire for simplicity and minimalism. "I strive to translate the essence of my thought in its simplest form, through suggestive evocations but with intensity." According to him, to produce a high quality powerful piece of abstract art, it is essential to first master the rules of realism, to later better be able to twist and undo them. Hence, Marshal's acquired drawing skills now allow him to freely deconstruct shapes and experiment with totally unconstrained ideas. "Before you can make anything burst apart, you must be able to depict reality. Somewhat in the image of Mark Rothko, I also play around with multiple declinations of one colour, layering them over one another to achieve a number of overlapping shades in sustained totality. I also paint portraits on occasion, which allows me to retain my ability of respecting conventions pertinent to a concrete subject."

Another session of virtual surfing introduces him to the art of collage, which has since grafted itself to his other techniques. This demanding medium, which he approaches through the use of torn pieces of magazines, he feels is a perfect testimony of our contemporary society, characterized by an over-abundance of frequently fleeting information. The path travelled allows him to evolve sufficiently enough to assert himself more confidently, converting from yesterday's murmur to today's clamour. Apart from the processes that add structure to his compositions, the study of Russian Impressionists has also imparted a bold and direct application of impasto with fewer brushstrokes. His palette is also limited to 3 or 4 colours, each pushed to the max to exploit their total potential. In any case, he considers mistakes as being integral parts of his creative process and many discarded paintings are displayed in his studio as a reminder that he should never be scared of taking risks. His attempts notably include throwing paint across the room and letting it drip unbridled, or impetuously splattering paint onto the canvas. "We often learn more from our mistakes, and progress is often achieved through analysing our errors. What's important is to never be afraid of venturing too far, even when results are

disappointing. In my case, I consider only about half of my paintings to be good enough to leave my studio. I re-use the ones I don't particularly like as bases for new paintings by covering them with gesso, the old reliefs adding texture and depth." His achievement, in short, rests on a perpetual cycle where successes are but continual reruns generated from initial dissatisfaction or even failure. A precept of recycling that proves quite fruitful indeed!

Since his parents, wife and agent handle all tasks peripheral to creation, Marshal is able to exclusively dedicate himself to the act of painting, 6 days a week. "My mind is constantly wired towards possible new experiences, projects to be realised. At least a hundred future works are simmering in my head. My brain never stops gleaning facts pertinent to my work, even at night!" This ebullience however is never a sign of turmoil as contemplation is at the center of his lifestyle, in an effort to impart feelings of calm and serenity to his works. Each and every day he takes time to pause and reflect on wise words to help generate peaceful and radiant energy, which is then projected into his movements and pictorial choices. Music is another one of his muses, in all its declinations, effecting a transfer of energy from the world of sound onto the canvas. "All the arts come together in some way. The sounds and rhythms induce an emotional reaction in me and the sentiment that inhabits me is reflected onto the canvas as I paint. It softens angles and volumes or, to the contrary, strengthens lines and contours, while my focus remains on the core of the message I wish to communicate." Actively involved in his community, Marshal provides free art courses twice a week, which are regularly attended by some fifteen people of all ages wishing to develop their talent under the discrete guidance of a very accomplished artist. "I get to witness beautiful things being created and I am happy to be able to contribute to the wellbeing of others." In future, Marshal hopes to be able to set-up his studio in different Canadian provinces every summer, allowing him to see more of the country but mostly to capture new lights. These new visions, forged by the vastness of the Saskatchewan sky, the infinite ocean that borders Nova Scotia or the reddish soil of Prince-Edward-Island, should soon fuel his repertoire of possibilities, allowing for innovative original compositions.

Lisanne Le Tellier

Marshal is represented by Galerie Le Balcon d'art in Saint Lambert. His works are present in numerous local and international corporate collections.
 Marshalarts.org



Three is a crowd, 30 x 24 in



Falcon Moon, 30 x 48 in